

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH008
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Name of Service:	First Class Montessori
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Address of Service:	56 Towerview, Dublin Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	N91 K194
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Name of Registered Provider:	Deirdre Molloy
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	14/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	34	PM	n/a
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, SAP Office, St Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, N91 N4XC.
Inspection undertaken by:	T. Duignan
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

First Class Montessori was established in 2007 as a privately run childcare service for pre-school children aged 2 years to 6 years by the present registered provider. The sessional service operates from 9:00am -12:00 hours, Monday to Friday.

The service is located in a purpose-built accommodation adjoining the registered providers home with two pre-school rooms for the children's use – the big room and the top room. Each pre-school room has an outdoor play area directly accessible from each room.

Staffing

First Class Montessori employs four childcare staff and the registered provider all of whom work directly with the children. On the day of inspection, there were five staff and one student present.

The adults working in the service have completed a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the

registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) There was a designated person in charge.
 - (b) The named person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.
 - (c) All the staff members were aware of the management structure, the lines of authority and their roles within the service.

Seven staff files including one student were reviewed.

- (2)
- (a)(b) Two written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source other than a past employer, were available in respect of seven adults whose records were reviewed.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for all adults working in the service. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Not applicable, as no adult had resided outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months whose records were reviewed.

(4) Six adults working directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1) There were thirty-four children attending the service being supervised directly by six adults during the inspection.

(3) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to on the day of the inspection.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Physical and material environment:

The two pre-school rooms inspected had suitable and age-appropriate play and learning materials/equipment for the children. The indoor environments had areas of interest and included home/kitchen, construction, small world and library areas with plenty of props and real-life materials. There was plenty of sensory materials, puzzles, jigsaws, art and craft materials and equipment for fine and gross motor development and skills. A sufficient and appropriate number of child sized tables and chairs were available and low-level shelving units displaying the materials and equipment were easily accessible to the children.

Each pre-school room had their own outdoor area, and the children were observed moving seamlessly between indoors and outdoors based on their play choice and interest. There was a covered space outside the top room and a large retractable canopy was available in the outdoor area used by the children attending the big room.

Suitable rest areas with child sized couches provided a place for children to sit and relax if they wished to take a break from activities.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

The entrance to the service was secured and managed by the staff members to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the Early Years' service.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. The staff members advised the inspector that they immediately cut/chop any food that may pose a choking risk to a child at snack time. Necklaces and chains are removed if a child is observed to be wearing them.

There was documentary evidence available that daily indoor risk assessments were completed daily and reviewed to promptly identify and manage any potential risks in the care rooms. The service had a system in place to manage maintenance issues.

Infection Control:

The staff members supervised the children's handwashing and handwashing routines were well established. Staff members were observed washing their hands during the morning.

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towels were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying.

Children's lunches were refrigerated on arrival at the service.

Cleaning schedules were maintained for the room environment which were observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection. The staff members were familiar with the required practices when administering medication in the service. There were no children attending who required medication to be administered while attending the service.

Safe Sleep:

A comfortable rest area was available in the two pre-school rooms for any child who wished to have a rest or take a break from activities for a while.

Fire Safety:

The staff members were familiar with the fire evacuation procedures from the service. Fire exits were not obstructed.

Outings:

The service does conduct outings.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. There were no visibility strips on the glass doors to outdoor area in the two pre-school rooms. This could cause a potential injury to a child if they failed to recognise the glass.

Infection Control:

2. Open waste bins were observed in top room and sanitary areas. The contents were accessible to the children which was not appropriate for infection control purposes.

This was a non-compliance following inspection conducted on 8 March 2023. The corrective action submitted by the registered provider following the inspection failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance.

Fire Safety:

3. The smoke alarm was not serviced yearly as the last maintenance service was completed on 9 March 2023.
This was a non-compliance following inspection conducted on 8 March 2023. The corrective action submitted by the registered provider following the inspection failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance.

4. Monthly fire evacuation drills, which are necessary to ensure that all children and staff can safely evacuate the premises in the event of a fire or other emergency were not completed monthly. The documentary evidence available showed that three fire drills had been completed since September 2024.

This was a non-compliance following inspection conducted on 8 March 2023. The corrective action submitted by the registered provider following the inspection failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. There are new bright visibility strips on the doors

Infection Control:

2. New foot pedal bins were purchased and are in place.

Fire Safety:

3. The smoke alarm has been serviced on 15 May 2025.
4. Fire drills will be completed and documented monthly.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photograph

Infection Control:

2. Photograph

Fire Safety:

3. Document

Summary Comment

The written response, photographic and documentary evidence submitted by the registered provider has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 23.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1) There was a person who was trained in in first aid response (FAR) present and were immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)

(a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position in each care room.

(b) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was available at all times to the staff members caring for the children attending the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) A written record was available of fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 3 March 2025.
 - (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced on 4 June 2024 and the smoke alarm were last serviced on 9 March 2023.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover valid until 27 March 2026. The insurance provided cover for 44 children.